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Lava Beds National Monument News Release

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Lava Beds National Monument Announces Seasonal Cave Opening and Closures

TULELAKE, California — For over two decades Lava Beds National Monument has alternated closures of monument caves to protect bat maternity roosts in the summer and hibernation sites in the winter. If one of your favorite caves on Cave Loop wasn't accessible this summer due to a bat closure, then now is the time to visit and take advantage of the winter openings. Presently Blue Grotto Cave, Ovis/Paradise Alleys Cave, Natural Bridge, Thunderbolt Cave, and South Labyrinth Cave have reopened after summer closures. Within these cave there are miles of passage, many entrances and interesting lava features. In total, Lava Beds NM is home to 14 species of bats. In many parts of the western U.S. these bats are in decline, whereas the monument harbors stable populations, largely due to bat protection efforts.

The Townsend's Big-eared Bat is the species most commonly seen at Lava Beds NM. As its name suggests, its large ears are a distinctive trait; average ear length measures nearly a third its body length. Their ears are used not only for hearing, but also for temperature control, and are often tucked under wings when hibernating.

The Townsend's Big-eared Bat is a Species of Special Concern in California, and has been experiencing population decline due to human disturbance and loss of habitat. Lava Beds NM protects hibernacula sites home to over 1,200 Townsend's Big-eared Bats, the largest known group of this species in California. Townsends have been known to leave roost sites, and abandon pups behind when disturbed.

This winter, Sentinel Cave, Labyrinth/Lava Brook Cave, and Juniper/Hercules Leg Cave will be closed until mid-April to protect hibernating bats. Help us safeguard wildlife at Lava Beds NM by respecting cave closures, and please tell a ranger if you see any bats during your visit.

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Lava Beds National Monument, established in 1925, is a land of turmoil, both geologic and historic. Over the last half-million years, volcanic eruptions have created a rugged landscape dotted with diverse volcanic features. Lava tube caves, Native American sites, historic battlefields and a high desert wilderness experience await you!

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